

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A1-A8.

WASHINGTON STAR  
16 July 1981

# Ex-Officer Indicted As Spy for Soviets

By Howie Kurtz  
Washington Star Staff Writer

A former Army warrant officer was indicted and arrested yesterday on charges of selling secret communications codes to the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, a service that allegedly earned him the honorary rank of colonel in the Red Army.

Joseph George Helmich, 44, was indicted in Jacksonville, Fla., on charges of passing highly classified information to Soviet agents while he was stationed in Paris from January 1963 to July 1964.

The indictment says that Helmich, who had access to top-secret communications information when he was in the U.S. Army, already has received \$131,000 from the Soviets for his alleged services. As recently as last year, the indictment says, he was making plans to pick up further payments that the Soviets had agreed to set aside for him.

It was not immediately clear why law enforcement authorities were now pursuing a case that dates to the mid-1960s. One official said, however, that federal authorities had received information in recent months that led them to examine Helmich's activities.

Helmich, a Florida native who left the Army in 1966 and has held a variety of jobs since then, was arrested after an extensive investigation by the FBI.

Helmich moved to the northeast Florida coast about a month ago from Niagara Falls, N.Y. He was arrested without incident at his par-

ents' home in Jacksonville, where he lived with his wife and one child.

Gary Betz, the U.S. attorney in Jacksonville, said Helmich was being held there on \$500,000 bond and was scheduled to be arraigned today. Betz had asked a federal magistrate to set the high bond because he said there was an "extreme risk" that Helmich might flee the country.

When Helmich was on assignment with the Army Signal Corps in Paris, an Army spokeswoman said, he was a custodian for a highly sensitive U.S. cryptographic system called the KL-7, a position that requires top security clearance.

In January 1963, the indictment says, Helmich walked into the Soviet trade mission in Paris and handed to Soviet agents instructions on how to repair, maintain and operate the secret communications system. He also gave the Soviets key lists for the KL-7 and other technical details about how the system worked, the indictment says.

During the same period in Paris, the indictment says, Helmich gave the Soviets "information in the event of anticipated hostilities."

In return, the indictment charges, the Soviets trained Helmich in espionage skills, secret photography and writing and clandestine communications. Officials said Helmich also was made a colonel in the Red army, an honor the Soviets occasionally bestow on foreign nationals who help them.

In 1964, Helmich allegedly made "false and misleading" statements to federal officials in Florida in an effort to cover up his activities, the indictment charges.

Helmich, who served in the Army from 1954 to 1966, also was assigned to Fort Bragg, N.C., to a communications school at Fort Gordon, Ga., and to a signal company in Vietnam. He is charged with several counts of conspiracy and espionage.